

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2022

Statement on the Fourth Anniversary of the Shooting at the Tree of Life-Or L'Simcha Congregation Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

October 27, 2022

On October 27, 2018, a quiet Shabbat morning was shattered by gunfire and hate, and a place of sanctuary became a place of carnage. Twenty-two people were worshipping at the Tree of Life Congregation that day; eleven of them would never return home to their families. Six more were wounded, including four police officers who responded to the scene, in addition to countless others forever scarred by this heinous assault.

In the 4 years since that terrible day, the people of Pittsburgh have shown us what it means to be stronger than hate: welcoming the community to Torah study sessions; showing their support for refugees and immigrants; reimagining the Tree of Life synagogue as both sanctuary and memorial. The courage and character of the Pittsburgh community remains an inspiration to us all.

As we grieve this deadliest act of antisemitism in American history, we stand with the community of Squirrel Hill—and Jewish communities across America and around the world—in resolving to combat anti-Semitism and hate in all of its forms. This is especially true as we witness an ugly increase in anti-Semitism in America. That's why I established the first Ambassador-level Special Envoy To Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism and appointed the renowned Holocaust expert Deborah Lipstadt to the role. My administration worked with Congress to secure the largest ever increase in funding for the security of synagogues and other religious institutions. And, at last month's United We Stand Summit, my administration announced a series of actions and commitments to take on hate-fueled violence.

We are also determined to tackle the scourge of gun violence that has stolen lives from Pittsburgh to Poway, from Newtown to Charleston, from Buffalo to Uvalde, and from countless other communities in between. I've taken historic executive action to reduce gun violence, including by reining in the proliferation of ghost guns. This summer, the Senate confirmed the first permanent head of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives in more than 7 years, and my administration brought together Republicans and Democrats to pass the most significant gun safety legislation in nearly 30 years. I am committed to building on that progress by banning assault weapons and high-capacity magazines—we've done it before, and we can do it again.

The rabbis teach that "what comes from the heart, enters the heart." On this difficult day, our hearts are with the families of the victims, the survivors, and all those impacted by the Tree of Life shooting. May their memories be a blessing, and may we continue to bridge the gap between the world we see and the future we seek.

NOTE: The statement referred to Pittsburgh, PA, residents Andrea Wedner and Daniel Leger and police officers Timothy Matson, Daniel Mead, Anthony Burke, and Michael Smidga, survivors of the 2018 shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue; and Steven M. Dettelbach, Director, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives.

Categories: Statements by the President : Tree of Life-Or L'Simcha Congregation synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA, fourth anniversary of shooting.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Burke, Anthony; Dettelbach, Steven A.; Leger, Daniel; Lipstadt, Deborah; Matson, Timothy; Mead, Daniel; Smidga, Michael; Wedner, Andrea.

Subjects: Civil rights : Minorities :: Anti-Semitism; Justice, Department of : Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives; Law enforcement and crime : Gun violence, prevention efforts; Pennsylvania : 2018 shooting in Pittsburgh; State, Department of : Anti-Semitism, U.S. Special Envoy To Monitor and Combat.

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